

RATANBAI KATRAK LECTURES  
1949

ZOROASTER  
POLITICIAN OR WITCH-DOCTOR?

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OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS  
LONDON: GEOFFREY CUMBERLEGE

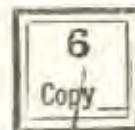
1951

Oxford University Press, Amen House, London E.C.4

GLASGOW NEW YORK TORONTO MELBOURNE WELLINGTON

MELBOURNE CALCUTTA MUMBAI CAPE TOWN

Geoffrey Cumberlege, Publisher to the University



BL 1555  
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PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

## FIRST LECTURE

I AM conscious of the honour conferred upon me by the University of Oxford in inviting me to deliver the third series of Ratanbai Katrak Lectures. These lectures, which were founded by the late Dr. Nanabhai Navroji Katrak of Bombay, were first given in 1925 by Dr. Gray of Columbia University, under the title of 'The Foundations of the Iranian Religions'. Dr. Gray gave a valuable and comprehensive survey of the Iranian Pantheon and Pandemonium, which, later published in Bombay, did not, at any rate in the West, receive the attention to which it was entitled.

The second series was delivered by Professor Bailey, of the University of Cambridge, in 1936 and published by the Oxford University Press in 1943. The modest title of his lectures, 'Zoroastrian Problems in the Ninth-Century Books', underrates their value. 'They are, in fact, perfect specimens of the manner in which the problems of the Iranian past, in particular the problems of the Zoroastrian religion, should be dealt with nowadays; that is to say, not only with a proper understanding of the Pahlavi literature, which remains *terra incognita* to most other scholars, but also with the fullest use of the Middle Iranian material that has come to us from central Asia in the course of the present century. The standard Professor Bailey has set in his lectures should serve as a warning to those rash spirits who engage in Zoroastrian studies without equipping themselves properly, without reading the Pahlavi literature, without learning to handle the intricate Manichaean fragments in Middle Persian, Parthian, and Sogdian, without studying the Sogdian and Khotanese books. The days when a knowledge of the Avesta and a dash of Pahlavi were considered sufficient are irrevocably past.'

The Electors to the Ratanbai Katrak Lecturership allow the lecturer complete freedom to choose his own subject, provided it is connected with the study of the Zoroastrian religion or its later developments. On this occasion they expressed the wish that if possible I should, in the course of these lectures, define my attitude towards the theories propounded by Professor Nyberg. It was a pleasure to me to accept this suggestion and to secure an opportunity

for enlarging on the opinions I expressed briefly in the course of a review of Professor Nyberg's book, *The Religions of Ancient Iran*.<sup>1</sup>

Any discussion of Professor Nyberg's theories is bound to have constant regard to the latest and—regrettably—last work published by Professor Herzfeld in 1947, a few months before his death, which we lament as the greatest blow to Iranian Studies in recent years. Herzfeld's work, *Zoroaster and his World*, has been aptly described by a friend of mine as 'an 800-page review of Nyberg's book'; indeed, Herzfeld has discussed and criticized, and at great length, almost every word that Nyberg had written. As I am often in agreement with Herzfeld's views, as far as his criticism of Nyberg's theories goes, my task has been eased considerably; for most of what I proposed to say on this subject has now already been said by Herzfeld, probably much better than I could do it. However, Herzfeld's work is by no means confined to mere criticism. His main object was to state and restate his own theories on Zoroaster, to which he had devoted a great deal of his writing in the last twenty years: he restates opinions he had held for a long time, he elaborates them, he fortifies them by fresh argument, and at the same time he criticizes Nyberg, as indeed Nyberg, on his part, had criticized him in his own book. A controversy between these two scholars was natural and inevitable; for their disagreement on everything that concerns Zoroaster is complete.

Herzfeld's Zoroaster was a man who lived his life in the full light of history, in the time of Cyrus and Darius. By birth and by marriage, he was himself a member of the two royal houses that dominated the history of Ancient Iran, of the Median dynasty and of its successor, the Persian house of the Achaemenides. Astyages, the last of the Median kings, whom Cyrus deposed, was Zoroaster's grandfather. After Cyrus had gained his great victory, he married Zoroaster's mother. Cyrus' daughter, Atossa, was therefore half-sister to Zoroaster. Atossa married Cambyses, Cyrus' son and successor, and after the early death of Cambyses she married his successor, the Great King Darius. Through Atossa, therefore, Zoroaster was brother-in-law to both Cambyses and Darius.

Herzfeld's Zoroaster was primarily a politician. He soon got into difficulties with the government authorities—not because (as we might perhaps expect) he had claims to the throne himself; for as

<sup>1</sup> *The Journal of Theological Studies*, xlii (1943), pp. 219-22.

a grandson of Astyages he might have planned the removal of Cyrus or Cambyses, he might have plotted for the restoration of the Median royal house, of which he himself was the chief; but such considerations do not seem to have entered his head. His sole interest, as politician, was to improve the situation of agricultural labour in Media, or, to use Herzfeld's own words, he wanted 'to replace serfdom by the voluntary, sworn-to obedience of the vassal'.<sup>1</sup> In pursuit of this aim he got into conflict with the ruling classes, the great land-owners, noblemen, and priests. He was indicted as a revolutionary in Rayā, his home-town, and brought before a court presided over by none other than Gaumāta the Magian, who later usurped the kingship and was murdered by Darius. Gaumāta condemned him to banishment, and Cambyses, at that time Viceroy of Media—for all this happened still during the lifetime of Cyrus—confirmed the judgement.<sup>2</sup> Zoroaster was extremely indignant at the treatment he had suffered, most of all with Cambyses who, as his step-brother, should, by ancient right, have upheld him.

Now comes that memorable journey into exile to which Herzfeld has devoted so much labour, the journey along the post-road from Rayā to Tūs with the now famous halt at Qūmis where a certain Persian gentleman refused to let him stay in his castle as a refugee. In each of his recent books Herzfeld has added fresh details to this story: now everything has become clear, except the one point whether the coach in which Zoroaster travelled was his own or one hired from a friend.<sup>3</sup>

For the whole fascinating tale, Gaumāta's court, Cambyses' failure to revise the judgement, Rayā, Qūmis, Tūs—for all this Herzfeld has discovered clear evidence in Zoroaster's own poems, the Gāthās, which in this matter are his sole source. All previous students, and there have been many, have failed to find any reference to any such events in the Gāthās, or for that matter anywhere else.

At Tūs Zoroaster found favour with the there residing satrap of Parthia, Vištāspa, the father of Darius who was destined to become the King of Kings of Persia after the death of Cambyses. At Vištāspa's court important positions were held by two brothers, Jāmāspa and Frašaustra, members of a leading Persian family. Zoroaster thought it wise to strengthen his position by allying

<sup>1</sup> Herzfeld, *Zoroaster and his World*, i. 349; cf. *ibid.* 199.  
<sup>2</sup> Cf. *ibid.* 202.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *ibid.* 186.

himself to this family, and so added a daughter of Frašaustra's to his harem. His newly acquired relatives did all they could to reverse the judgement of banishment which Cambyses had so naughtily confirmed: both Jāmāspa and Frašaustra travelled from Tūs to the far-distant court of the Great King Cyrus himself to intercede on his behalf.<sup>1</sup> Cyrus, who after all was Zoroaster's step-father, could well be expected to stretch out a helping hand to the fugitive. But all was in vain: Zoroaster had to remain at Tūs, cut off from the centres of the Persian Empire, cut off from the chance of indulging in political intrigues, his favourite occupation. All he could do, and did do, was to compose a few more verses cursing Cambyses and his bosom-friend Gaumāta.

After Cyrus died and Cambyses succeeded to the throne, Zoroaster's prospects of re-establishing himself in the rank to which he was born seemed to disappear altogether. However, fate smiled on him again: soon he could rejoice at the news of the sudden death of Cambyses, and soon he could arrange, behind the scenes, for the murder of his bitterest enemy, Gaumāta the Magian.

The story of Cambyses, his misdeeds and his misfortunes, how he had his younger brother Bardiya secretly killed, how during his absence from Persia Gaumāta the Magian usurped the throne pretending to be Bardiya, how Cambyses died when he hurriedly returned from Egypt, how the impersonation of Bardiya by Gaumāta was discovered, and how seven noble Persians, Darius among them, murdered Gaumāta and proclaimed Darius as King of Kings—the story is too well known to bear repetition. Here we are concerned solely with the role that Zoroaster is said to have played in the matter.

The man to whom Cambyses had entrusted the task of killing his brother was, according to Herodotus, Prexaspes, a noble Persian. This Prexaspes, we learn from Herzfeld, was the brother of Jāmāspa and Frašaustra, an uncle, therefore, of one of Zoroaster's wives. Herodotus makes it clear that Prexaspes kept his secret carefully enough; his life would have been forfeit had it become known that he had slain the heir-apparent to the throne. However that be, thanks to Herzfeld we know now that Prexaspes could not, after all, keep the secret from his brothers. He might as well have told everybody; for his brother Frašaustra, of course, told his daughter, and his daughter told her husband, Zoroaster, and Zoroaster gle-

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Herzfeld, *op. cit.* i. 203.

fully told the world. And when the news of the death of Cambyses had reached Tūs, he saw at last how he could revenge himself on Gaumāta. He composed a few more stirring verses to incite his listeners to the murder of the usurper;<sup>1</sup> one at least among them, Darius the son of Vishtāspa, hung on his lips and hastened away to do the deed to which Zoroaster had inspired him.

It is a matter for regret that when Darius, after his success, set up an inscription to commemorate these events and enumerated the names of his helpers in it, he did not so much as mention the name of Zoroaster to whose advice he was so greatly indebted. Those who disputed Herzfeld's theories inevitably pointed out that the omission of Zoroaster's name was significant. However, this point has been cleared up now: it was at Zoroaster's own suggestion that his part in the affair was not mentioned: *he wished to work in the dark*. Here we have the picture of two men who conspire to hide the truth, but who, in their speeches and writings, almost monotonously, enjoin the speaking of Truth as the chief duty of Man, who never cease condemning all lies and liars, all deceit and hypocrisy. And one of these two cunning and hypocritical intriguers was the man whom the Persians, mistakenly it seems, regarded as their prophet for many centuries.

So much for Herzfeld's Zoroaster. Nyberg's Zoroaster is a very different kind of person. He lived somewhere in the region of Oxus and Jaxartes, beyond the countries that had come into contact with the civilized states of Babylonia and Mesopotamia, in a nation that had no history. He was a prehistoric man. While Herzfeld gives us precise dates for almost every event of Zoroaster's life, Nyberg declares that the question of Zoroaster's date is altogether unessential and without interest.<sup>2</sup>

In his tribe Zoroaster held the hereditary office of witch-doctor or medicine-man. He faithfully fulfilled the duties that were attached to this position among the savage tribes of Inner-Asia before they were subdued and civilized by the Persian Empire. Their religion can be best described as a form of shamanism; its chief points are two, both of equal importance: the ordeal and the Maga. The tribal mythology, theology, and all rites derive from ordeal and Maga; they are their functions. The ordeal, the divine judgement here carried out by pouring molten metal on the litigants, is

<sup>1</sup> Cf. ibid. i. 202.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Nyberg, *Die Religionen des alten Iran*, p. 45.

self-explanatory; it was administered by a college of Fellows of the Ordeal, presided over by Zoroaster as medicine-man and shaman-in-chief.

It is less easy to explain the purport of the Maga. Secondarily, the Maga is an enclosure within which the sacred rites are performed; primarily it is a term for 'magic singing', and as a collective, 'a group of people engaging in magic songs'. Within the Maga the members of the tribe who were admitted to the sacred community met from time to time to perform certain acts that aimed at reaching a state of ecstasy. The chief means employed to this end were singing and probably dancing, hence the curious name. Quicker results were reached by the application of steam and hemp (the question whether Zoroaster used hemp for such purposes will be discussed later).

As soon as the participants in these ceremonies had fallen into a trance, they began to shout incomprehensible words and syllables; but presently they fell into a complete coma. In this state they imagined themselves to reach a mystical union with God, or rather with Vohu Manah. Their souls, released by trance from the body, rose up to the higher regions to join with other souls who had been freed either in the same way or by death; there is no real difference between these two groups: as we might say 'sleep is the brother of death' the shamanists would have said 'trance is the brother of death'. Vohu Manah is the collective of the Free-souls, or the cosmic, divine Free-soul.

To reach a trance or a coma was regarded as the greatest boon; to be excluded from the fellowship of the Maga a terrible misfortune. It is clear that in a given tribe the leading shaman must have exercised great influence; for beside presiding over the ceremonies connected with the ordeal he was the chief of the Maga and as such determined who was to be admitted to the supreme happiness the Maga alone could bestow.

We also begin to understand now why the Gāthās, the poems by Zoroaster which his community so faithfully transmitted through the centuries, have presented so great difficulties to the scholars who have hitherto tried to fathom their meaning. If the Gāthās are crazy mutterings shouted by a senseless man in a hemp-induced stupor, it is pointless to seek much meaning in them. It was also rather pointless that those who—mistakenly—believed themselves to be following in the footsteps of Zoroaster should have taken so

much trouble to preserve what turns out to be gibberish. As to the scholars who in modern times studied the Gāthās without finding the true key to them, the less we say about their inept attempts the better.

We come now to an intricate problem: the religious development which Zoroaster underwent. To understand Nyberg's position, it is necessary to make a few general remarks. One of the chief problems that confront the student of the Zoroastrian religion is the relation to each other of several types of religious belief that appear to have coalesced in Zoroastrianism (I am using this term only of the later form of religion). As a rule it is assumed that there were two, or at the most three, religions involved; we can pass by those extremists who operate with larger numbers, in some cases far larger numbers.

The most important form of religion involved is that represented by Zoroaster himself; he may have originated it; or he may have inherited it; or he may have inherited it in part and added to it on his own. The chief points in Zoroaster's religion are these: belief in one God whose name is Ahura Mazdāh; belief in an anti-divine force led by Anra Mainyu, the 'Evil Spirit'; the belief that the acts of mankind exercised great influence on the outcome of the incessant struggle between God and the Evil Spirit, resulting in the attribution to Man of a unique position as the arbiter between Good and Evil; and finally, the association with God of a number of so-called *Amaša Spantas*, on whose function scholars always have disagreed and probably always will disagree; some regard them as aspects of God (that is also my view); according to Nyberg they are social collectives representing the 'Tribe' in its various aspects.

The second chief ingredient in Zoroastrianism is the comparatively primitive polytheism which the Iranians had inherited from the remote past, from the time when their forbears were still in contact with the tribes, later known as Indo-Aryans, that immigrated into India. This primitive religion existed before and after Zoroaster; it still flourished centuries after the destruction of the Persian Empire by Alexander. There were many gods and goddesses: Mithra, Anāhita, Vərəthrāzna, Tīštrya, and so on; there were animal sacrifices on a lavish scale; an intoxicating drink, Haoma, the Indian Soma, played an important role in the sacrificial ceremonies. No doubt this religion assumed different forms in the

different provinces at different times; the points of divergence have been stressed, in my view exaggerated, by several students; they need not concern us here.

The third form of religion involved is one about which we know very little, the religion of the Magi. It seems to have exhausted itself in a narrow-minded ritual; purification rites, particularly in connexion with dead bodies, characterize it. Some regard Magian as a remnant of the autochthonous religion which the Iranians found existing in Media and elsewhere when they entered the country as conquerors, and which they gradually absorbed.

Now it is evident that there is a great gulf between the primitive polytheism and the religion represented by Zoroaster. Indeed—on this point there is unanimity—Zoroaster attacks the polytheists in his poems, and does it in terms that leave us in no doubt about his views. Nevertheless, in the Zoroastrianism we find the polytheism inextricably mixed with Zoroaster's own religion. And the merging of the two forms, which apparently also swallowed up the third, must have taken place at a fairly early date, by 400 B.C. at the very latest. How did it come about that these two incompatibles combined in a harmonious association which was solid enough to endure until the present day? To find a satisfactory answer to this question is one of the chief tasks before the students of Zoroastrianism. The answer usually given is that the merger was due to the integration of the Iranian provinces that was brought about by the Persian Empire; that it was deliberately encouraged or promoted by the Persian government.

These few observations will be sufficient, I hope, to indicate the nature of the problem by which we are confronted, so that I can now proceed to explain the solution at which Professor Nyberg has arrived. According to Nyberg, the religion which, together with the medicinemanship, Zoroaster had inherited from his forefathers, resembled the later Zervanism in certain points, especially in its theology in the narrow sense: Ahura Mazdāh here occupies the position which Zervan, the god of Time, held in Zervanism. Ahura Mazdāh is a *Deus otiosus*; he has set the world in motion, but now keeps aloof from it; its management is left to two contrasting and contending powers, the Good Spirit and the Evil Spirit. In Zervanism Zervan creates Ahura Mazdāh and the Evil Spirit and then takes no further part in the affairs of the world. In his aloofness Zoroaster's Ahura Mazdāh, as seen by Nyberg, reminds one of the

shadowy gods of Gnostic systems, who are known as 'The Nameless God' or 'The Stranger'.

This is the central point in the religion into which Zoroaster was born. He would no doubt have transmitted it unchanged to succeeding generations, had not exterior events compelled him to search his heart and reformulate his creed. The event that produced a revolution in his mind was missionary activity by primitive polytheists, by that group which put the God Mithra into the foreground. The propagandists of Mithraism, with their animal sacrifices and nocturnal haoma orgies, exercised an unholy fascination upon the simple, unsophisticated members of Zoroaster's community. The number of those who attended the Maga to spend their days in a peaceful coma grew less and less; the situation worsened from day to day. Zoroaster held stoutly to his ancient religion at the beginning, but soon his mind was affected by doubts. This is the 'great crisis' in his life.

In his perplexity he turned to his God: Ahura Mazdāh heard his prayer: he received a revelation. In a vision he saw that his earlier theology had been wrong: Ahura Mazdāh, in truth, was not the God who keeps aloof from the world, the God that had created both the Good and the Evil Spirits. No, Ahura Mazdāh was an active God, who guided the good, who was ever ready to stretch out a helping hand to those who sought for Truth. He had not created the Evil Spirit: the Evil Spirit was independent, hostile to him and all his creatures, equal or almost equal in power. In short, while he had been a Zervanist before, Zoroaster now became a strict Dualist, the author of that dualism that has characterized Zoroastrianism through the ages.

Armed with his new theology Zoroaster turned to the attack. However, while he had been able to do very little against the lusty Mithraists before, his sudden change of front did not improve matters. One can easily imagine that the few faithful friends that were ready to stand by him now despaired and turned away. At any rate he had to leave his tribe, reviled by his enemies, abandoned by his friends. 'The great crisis in Zoroaster's life—if I may use words I used once before—can be summed up in four words: alcohol prevailed over hemp.'

He found refuge in another tribe whose chief, one Vištāspa, welcomed him with open arms. Geographically, his move was from the Oxus to the Jaxartes—we had seen that in Herzfeld's view the

journey was from Rayā to Tūs. Vištāspa's tribe had originally observed religious customs similar to those current in Zoroaster's home country. Yet some time before Zoroaster's arrival this tribe, too, had become converted to Mithraism. Nevertheless, Vištāspa's tribe proves more receptive than his own to Zoroaster's persuasive words, and Vištāspa himself soon experiences the happiness of ecstasy on the newly established Maga. However, there is a considerable change in Zoroaster's attitude. He no longer fulminates against the wicked Mithraists. His earlier lack of success has made him more cautious in his dealings with them. He is ready to compromise. We might say: he has become a realist. He begins to make advances to the Mithraists, he uses bits of their terminology, he makes little concessions here and there. It was only by proceeding in this worldly-wise fashion that he succeeded in establishing himself in Vištāspa's tribe at all. And, fortunately for him, his new friends were still lukewarm in their Mithraism, were equally ready to make compromises. They accepted Zoroaster as their spiritual leader, they accepted Ahura Mazdāh, the dualism, the *Amoša Spōtas*, the Maga and all that went with it. And Zoroaster accepted Mithra and Anāhita and other constituents of Mithraism in its local form. He even admitted the haoma against which he had inveighed shortly before; but to relieve his conscience, he insisted on a radical change in the ingredients: in future haoma was to consist chiefly of water, milk, and plant-juice.

Thus Zoroaster, none other, became the founder of the composite Zoroastrianism, which other students attribute to later development. How far Zoroaster went in absorbing Mithraist elements is not very clear from Nyberg's book. At any rate, he began that process of uniting and combining which was continued after him by his disciples.

In concluding this brief description of Nyberg's theories I hope I have given a fairly accurate idea of the chief points in which he differs from earlier interpreters of Zoroaster. My description is necessarily selective, and the selection is in some respects coloured by personal views; others may regard other matters as of greater importance.<sup>1</sup> The points I have stressed are those on which I shall make a few remarks in these lectures.

<sup>1</sup> I pass by in silence such interesting matters as the 'Begiesung' of the pastures with cow urine (Nyberg, op. cit., pp. 198 sqq.), an activity which the followers of Zoroaster, to believe Nyberg, apparently considered necessary and desirable.

Any student who contemplates the figures of Zoroaster drawn by Herzfeld on the one hand, by Nyberg on the other, will be filled with perplexity. How is it possible, one is bound to ask, that two scholars of renown who work with precisely the same material, use exactly the same sources, arrive at results that are diametrically opposed to each other? Here is Herzfeld's Zoroaster: a backstairs politician, an exiled nobleman who goes to the races when not engaged in malicious gossip. There is Nyberg's Zoroaster: a prehistoric man, a drunken witch-doctor muttering gibberish on his ludicrous Maga. There is comfort in the thought that if the one is right the other must be absurdly wrong; there is no middle way. There is more comfort in the possibility that both may be wrong.

It must be borne in mind that the theories advanced by Herzfeld and Nyberg are in opposition not only to each other, but also to the common opinion on Zoroaster, the opinion gradually developed by scholars during the last one hundred and fifty years. At least I think it is permissible to talk of a common opinion; for even though there was always a great deal of divergence of views, nevertheless, there had emerged commonly accepted notions on many essential points. One hesitates to abandon this common opinion in favour of theories that are as strongly contested as Nyberg's and Herzfeld's are. At the beginning of this lecture I pointed out that Nyberg had strongly criticized Herzfeld's ideas, and Herzfeld even more strongly Nyberg's views. It is noteworthy and significant that their mutual criticism carries conviction nearly throughout, while the exposition of the views they favour leaves the student filled with doubt and misgiving.

Although at first glance the theories presented by Nyberg and Herzfeld appear to be in contrast with each other, when one looks deeper one finds that nevertheless there are certain features in which they share. It is perhaps not accidental that the points that are common to them are also those that provoke the liveliest objection; the remainder of this lecture will be devoted to their enumeration.

Firstly, as I mentioned just now, they are at one in the dim view they take of the labours of their predecessors in Zoroastrian studies. Their attitude oscillates between the patronizing and the down-right contemptuous. For example, Nyberg sums up the common opinion on Zoroaster in these words: <sup>1</sup> *the picture of a progressive*

<sup>1</sup> Nyberg, op. cit., p. 202.

*country parson with an interest in agrarian reforms*—nicely formulated but scarcely an accurate description.

Secondly, both authors are certain in their minds that they have understood Zoroaster correctly, and tell us so frequently. It is pleasant to find this conviction in the midst of a maze of uncertainty. They would probably regard it as more accurate to describe their opinions as plain facts than as hypotheses.

Thirdly, both scholars have built their theories largely on the re-interpretation of words and to some extent on the emendation of passages in the Avesta. The second feature, emendation, is not so prominent in Nyberg's work, but very much so in Herzfeld's writings. Indeed, Herzfeld, when dealing with obscure passages, was fond of declaring: this line *must* mean so-and-so; therefore, it does mean so-and-so; if grammar does not agree with it, well, so much the worse for grammar.

Of far greater importance is the re-interpretation of words. Inevitably, there is a large number of words in the Avesta whose meanings are unknown, and a further large number whose meanings are imperfectly known; and such unknown or imperfectly known words are particularly numerous in the Gāthās. Then there are the words whose meaning is not in doubt; but even they, as all words, have a certain range of meaning, and from that range one can select an eccentric meaning. Now if one attributes an entirely arbitrary set of meanings to the unknown words, in such a way that this set of meanings is consistent within itself and conforms to a preconceived notion of the contents of the Gāthās, and if one proceeds to select suitable extreme meanings for the known words, one can translate the Gāthās (or for that matter any ancient text that carries a sufficient number of unknown words) in any way one likes; one can turn them into a philosophical treatise or a political note-book, a lawgiver's code or a soothsayer's utterance. Take a word that properly means 'house' or 'dwelling'; one can say 'in the Gāthās this word always designates the residence of the royal family', or one can say 'in the Gāthās this word regularly denotes the felt-hut in which the shaman enters into a coma', and so on, and by translating accordingly one can give the sense of these ancient verses a twist in any direction one may have in mind.

This 'method' was first introduced into this subject by Hertel. He noticed what everybody else had noticed before him, namely, that the ancient Iranians had the highest regard for Fire and Light.

Proceeding from this correct observation he soon conceived the notion that they had had regard for Fire and Light only, and set out to translate the Avesta in conformity with his ideas. He proved to his satisfaction that almost every word in the Avesta meant 'light' or 'bright' or 'fiery' or the like. It is difficult to preserve one's gravity when one reads his translations, which happily have not been taken seriously by most students. That his method should have been revived, in modified forms, by Herzfeld and Nyberg is a matter for regret. It is due to its application that on the one hand harmless words, such as *x'efna* 'sleep', are given a restricted and specialized meaning, such as 'trance', suitable to a shamanist environment, and that on the other hand the *Gāthās* turn out to be crowded with the technical terms of racing, as is fitting for the poems of an idle gentleman.

The fourth point common to the two scholars is their tendency to project the cultural phenomena of a later age into the more distant past. Thus Herzfeld seeks to elucidate events in the circle around his Zoroaster by constant reference to the happenings at the court of the Abbaside Caliphs, at the court of a Ma'mūr or a Mutawakkil; yet there is a world of difference between the cultural levels of these two epochs: so much has happened in between, the Persian Empire, Macedonians and Greeks, Parthians, Sassanians, and Islam, that immediate comparison is misleading rather than helpful. Similarly, Nyberg calls on the Dancing Dervishes of fairly recent times to lend support to his dancing and shrieking Zoroaster; indeed, his Zoroaster is modelled, in many respects, on the Muslim Dervishes. He anticipates our objection and surmises that the customs of those Dervishes may have had their origin in the shamanist Zoroastrianism; thus the Dervish customs are to help explain Zoroaster as a shaman, and the shamanist Zoroaster serves to explain the Dervish customs.

There is another matter which could be mentioned here. It seems to me that Nyberg's opinion on Zoroaster has been influenced in yet another way by his extensive knowledge of Islam, influenced in particular by the figure of Mohammed; Mohammed, that is to say, as seen by Western scholars. There is an implicit resemblance:

(a) Mohammed, who had hallucinations and visions owing to some nervous disorder; some unkind spirits even used to say he was an epileptic—Zoroaster, who had visions through the

physical and mental collapse attending shamanist practices; perhaps he was even a drug-addict.

- (b) Mohammed, the fervent preacher of the end of the world, who was rejected by his people and compelled to leave Mecca in danger of his life—Zoroaster, precisely the same, if we put 'home-tribe' instead of Mecca.
- (c) Mohammed, after the Hijrah, in al-Medinah, turning from a prophet into a politician—Zoroaster, after his flight, in Vistāspa's tribe, turning from a prophet into a religious politician.

However, there is genuine resemblance in one point only: both prophets leave their own country in distress and become honoured in their place of refuge; which merely illustrates what has been said on the point in the Gospels.

The fifth point is the claim that the Zoroastrians, who believed themselves the true disciples of Zoroaster, were wrong in this belief, that in fact they did not understand Zoroaster at all. It is plain that both Nyberg and Herzfeld are bound to make this claim; for the view they take of Zoroaster is basically different from the view held by the Zoroastrians through the ages. As to Herzfeld's Zoroaster, it is sufficient to point out that the Zoroastrians regarded their prophet as a prophet, not as a politician. And as regards Nyberg's Zoroaster, it is well known how deeply the Zoroastrians, at all times, abhorred such obscure practices as Nyberg attributes to their founder. Indeed, Nyberg himself admits that even in the later parts of the Avesta such practices are roundly condemned, and that the *Maga*, on which his Zoroaster performed, is treated with scant respect. One can add that this lack of appreciation went so far that in Sassanian times the word 'Mag(a)' could be used for nothing more dignified than a lavatory.<sup>1</sup> It is, of course, admitted that the faithful of any religion are apt to see their founder through rose-coloured spectacles, and to fail to understand him properly, in true historical perspective; but there are degrees of misunderstanding. Moreover, in no point are religions more conservative than in the forms of service and ritual observances; and of all religions known Zoroastrianism is perhaps the most conservative.

And so I come to the sixth and last point: the inadequacy of the figures drawn by Herzfeld and Nyberg to the place of Zoroaster in history. Whatever Zoroaster was, at any rate he was the founder

<sup>1</sup> e.g. *Yāft-i Frydn*, iii. 69.

of one of the great religions of the world. A great nation revered him as its prophet. Long after the Iranians had forgotten Cyrus and Darius and all their crowd, they continued to accord nearly divine honours to Zoroaster. Herzfeld's Zoroaster is manifestly insufficient: one does not see why this slightly shady politician, who had nothing in particular to his credit, should have been remembered at all. Nyberg at least admits Zoroaster to the dignity of prophet; but his ecstatic witch-doctor is not greatly distinguished from the multitude of other ecstatic witch-doctors that, one in each generation, interceded with the spirits for their fellow tribesmen, in each tribe all over northern Asia. His one distinction, it seems, is that he admitted not merely polytheists, but polytheism into his Church. That would have been treason—a compromise where no compromise can be allowed. It would have earned him contempt and derision instead of reverence and devotion.

It is said that Mohammed, driven to despair by the unbelievers, faltered one day and emitted a revelation which accorded sanctity to three goddesses whom the idolators worshipped. Mohammed repented at once of his momentary weakness and proclaimed his error on the next day. Thus he regained the respect of his friends and enemies. Had he persisted in this mistake, Islam would have died before it was born. That is exactly what would have happened to Zoroaster's religion, had Zoroaster been weak enough to adopt Mithra or any such divinity. His memory would not have survived the next generation.

## SECOND LECTURE

THE sources for the history and the history of culture in Iran are not uniformly satisfactory. Going back beyond the conquest of Persia by the Arabs in the seventh century, we find ourselves well informed about the Sassanian period, i.e. from the third century of our era onwards. We are well acquainted with the social history of that time, with the religions, with the material culture, with almost any side of human activity. There is a multitude of written documents, in Iranian as well as other languages, in Syriac, Armenian, and Greek; in addition, many books of that period were later translated into Arabic and so were preserved, as a whole or in extracts, to the present day.

Before the Sassanian epoch, in the five hundred years of Greek and Parthian rule from 300 B.C. to A.D. 200, there is a dark period. In spite of the accession of fresh material through excavations carried out in the last few decades, our information remains scanty; in comparison with our knowledge of the Sassanian times it is negligible. Here we deplore chiefly the nearly total absence of material written in the indigenous languages: a couple of documents in Parthian, an inscription in Parthian from the end of the period, a few coin legends, a few seal inscriptions—that is almost all. There was a series of interesting and very informative letters in the Sogdian language which were ascribed to the early part of the second century of our era; but recently it had to be shown that in fact they were two hundred years later than it had been thought.<sup>1</sup> For the lack of first-hand material we feel scarcely compensated by the two Zoroastrian books that must have been composed in that period: the Vendidad and the Nirangistan, two fragments of a priestly code. Their authors were anxious to preserve the ancient laws of the Magi, which threatened to fall into desuetude, and at the same time to elaborate them in a spirit of narrowness and bigotry. These books are typical products of priests who find themselves powerless to enforce their authority, as indeed the Magi were under Greek rule. They are so busy with regulations which are often fictitious and sometimes absurd that they throw nearly no

<sup>1</sup> *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, xii (1948), pp. 601-15.

light on contemporary reality, except, of course, on the authors' state of mind. So we have to rely, for this period, almost entirely on Greek sources, supplemented by Roman and Babylonian material. Even though some of the Greek material is first-hand and first-class, the sum-total of the evidence is insufficient to give us a tolerably clear picture of those five hundred years.

We are far better off for the preceding period, the time of the Achaemenian empire down to its conquest by Alexander. Here the indigenous material, from excavations and inscriptions, is more plentiful. The Greek reports are far more comprehensive. Living on the fringe of this gigantic state and constantly threatened by it, the Greeks of necessity saw to it that they kept in touch with what went on in their neighbour's lands. At the close of that time we receive a full-scale view of the whole country, from Asia Minor to the Indian frontier, from the Jaxartes to Baluchistan, through the reports on Alexander's expeditions. Even if we allow for the partiality which inevitably consciously or unconsciously colours all Greek reports, we still can say that we are well informed on that period.

When one approaches a problem of the cultural life of Iran, one does well to call these facts to mind. From the latter part of the sixth century B.C. onwards Iran is not an unknown land. Its inhabitants were constantly under the eyes of foreigners, foreigners, too, who more often than not were not well disposed to the Iranians, if not downright hostile. Any little oddity they observed was noted down eagerly and proclaimed to the world. Any custom that did not conform to Greek ideas was seized on to revile the powerful Persians, especially in the early period when the Greeks had good reason to fear and hate them. And what is the result of scrutinizing the records left by Greeks and other observers? It is this: that the Iranians, all of them, were thoroughly sane people.

Had any such primeval customs as Nyberg ascribes to Zoroaster existed in Iran, anywhere in Iran, we should for certain have heard all about it. The Greeks, of whom it has rightly been said that they had a keen sense for the ridiculous, would never have passed by in silence this witch-doctor or shaman who exposed himself—for payment—to his fellow tribesmen, shrieking animal sounds, foaming at the mouth, in a war-dance that ended up in a grand coma. The ventriloquism that forms an integral part of the shaman's art would also not have remained unnoticed. This figure

of fun would inevitably have become a standard item in the Greek Comedy.

Nyberg does indeed not claim that such customs persisted until the Persian period; for such a claim could not be maintained for a moment. They must therefore have disappeared, conveniently, between the time of Zoroaster and that of Cyrus or Darius, without leaving a trace. Nyberg's assumption that they ever existed is one that I cannot share. There is no evidence in its favour, except, of course, the arbitrary attribution of shamanist meanings to innocent words, which was described in my first lecture: 'trance' to 'sleep', 'mystical union' to 'company', 'companion in mysteries' to 'friend', 'shamanist rites' to 'action', and so forth.

Shamanism is a primitive type of religion characteristic of culturally backward tribes in northern Asia and Europe, of the Indians of northern America, Esquimaux, and others. Its existence among Iranians and Indo-Aryans has never been demonstrated. Even the ancestors common to the Iranians and Indo-Aryans possessed a religion that, if there is such a thing as progress in religious beliefs, had progressed considerably beyond the stage associated with shamanist practices. Zoroaster and his tribe must therefore have regressed to a level long surpassed by their fellows. Those who wish to follow Nyberg will have to convince us that a part of the Iranian tribes relapsed from the Indo-Iranian religion into beliefs characteristic of the childhood of humanity, but that these tribes recovered their good sense sufficiently quickly to escape all observation in the time of the Persian Empire.

I said a little while ago that, to go by Greek and other reports, the Iranians, from their first appearance in history, were eminently sane people. There are, however, a few passages in Greek books which, to a casual reader, may seem to run counter to this judgement—passages which attribute monstrous customs to some of the Iranian tribes. So monstrous, indeed, that one might be driven to say that these people must have been a little peculiar, to say the least. Those who write on the ancient Iranian religion are very fond of these rare passages and never fail to quote them. Among them there is one, on the customs of the ancient Bactrians, that surpasses all others in the attribution of magnificent savagery; it has been reproduced often, I think once too often. I have long been looking for a chance to demonstrate its wickedness.

In discussing the mode of exposing the dead to be devoured by

wild beasts, Nyberg has this sentence:<sup>1</sup> *Strabo attests this custom for Bactria in a very cruel form, the sick and decrepit being exposed even before death, and also for the Massagetae, while Herodotus reports that the latter buried those who died of illness.*

"Strabo attests"—this statement is already misleading. It suggests that Strabo, contemporary with the Emperor Augustus, witnessed the Bactrian habit himself. In fact, Strabo merely quoted an earlier author, and, moreover, quoted him with evident disapproval. This author was Onesicritus, one of Alexander's officers. The responsibility for the veracity of the story thus rests solely on Onesicritus, and the story, of course, refers to his time, not to the time of Strabo. Let us hear what Strabo does say:

Both the Sogdians and the Bactrians were not, in ancient times, much different from nomads in their manner of living and their customs, although those of the Bactrians were a little more civilized. Onesicritus, however, does not tell very nice things of these either: namely, that those who break down by reason of old age or sickness are thrown alive to dogs reared and kept for the purpose and called ἑνοφιασται 'undertakers' in the native language; that within the walls the capital city, Baktra, was for the greater part littered with human bones, while the outside proved clean; and that Alexander abolished the custom.<sup>2</sup>

Anyone who is even slightly acquainted with the history of Iran has only to consider the implications of this tale to realize that it is utter nonsense. When Onesicritus visited Bactria—if he ever did—that province had been an integral part of the Persian Empire for over two hundred years. The Persian Empire was in many respects not so very different from a modern state. It had a centralized administration to which the provincial governors had to submit written reports; a complicated system of taxes and a cadastral survey; regular inspection of the provinces by high officials to ensure that the policy laid down by the central government was carried out; a common system of writing, a common administrative language; a unified coinage; a network of admirable highroads; a highly developed judiciary; police and intelligence officers; a postal service; a primitive telegraph.

Onesicritus pretends to have made his curious observations not in an out-of-the-way corner of this state, but in the capital of a province, the seat of the local government, which almost wholly consisted of administrative offices, residences for the staff, from the

<sup>1</sup> Nyberg, *op. cit.*, p. 318.

<sup>2</sup> Strabo, vii. 11. 3, p. 517.

governor down, and military barracks. The leading members of this community were no doubt Persians, while most of the clerks probably came from Babylonia or Mesopotamia. If we are to follow Onesicritus, we have to visualize these officials wading their way to their offices through a litter of human bones and, when they felt a cold coming on, looking anxiously over their shoulders at the terrible undertaker dogs, lest they might mistake their flushed appearance for a serious illness and take appropriate action. For two hundred years they bore up under the strain without stopping to think whether the custom was really necessary, without ever making so much as a murmur of protest when they were assigned a post in dangerous Bactra: until, at last! glorious Alexander came, saw, and did, once again, what no one else was capable of doing.

If this fairy tale had been related by one accounted as the most reliable of authorities, we should still be compelled to reject it and rather begin to look askance at other statements emanating from the same source. As it is, Onesicritus has no authority at all. He is responsible for many fancy stories: the meeting between Alexander and the Queen of the Amazons, the hippopotami in India, snakes forty and seventy yards long kept by an Indian king, the inscription in the Greek language but Persian script on the tomb of Cyrus, and so on. Already in ancient times serious authors, e.g. Plutarch and Arrian, made fun of him; and Strabo himself described him as 'the captain-in-chief of incredible stories rather than of Alexander's (ships)'. He had been a sea captain, and as such had seen honourable service in Alexander's navy. When, in his dotage, he wrote his memoirs, he embroidered and embellished his adventures to make them more interesting; he was neither the first nor the last ancient mariner to love startling his audience. Nowadays the question discussed by historians is whether he was an out-and-out liar or a harmless *romancier*;<sup>1</sup> the answer is not of much importance: the point is that he should not be believed.

Dr. Tarn, who, of course, also rejects the story about the Bactrian dogs, thinks it may all the same have a weak basis in reality and suggests that Onesicritus may have met with, and not understood, a word translated to him as ἑνοφιασται, and made up a story out of this word, the pariah dogs, and his own cynic principles.<sup>2</sup> If it is really necessary to find an explanation for the ἑνοφιασται, the

<sup>1</sup> Cf. W. W. Tarn, *Alexander the Great*, ii. 35.

<sup>2</sup> W. W. Tarn, *Greeks in Bactria*, pp. 113 sq.

following may serve. Perhaps one night Onesicritus saw, at a distance, a Persian badger (*Meles canescens*), and, upon asking what it was, was told by his Persian companions that it was 'a kind of dog' named 'grave-digger'; for the Persians had their own peculiar zoological categories, and in the genus 'dog' they included a weird variety of animals: foxes, beavers, hedgehogs, and others. In modern Persian the badger is called *gurkan*, 'grave-digger', which could suitably be translated as *ἀνθεφορτής*; the ancient term is not known. As the name indicates, the badger has had the reputation of digging up and devouring corpses in recent times;<sup>1</sup> this accusation may well have been made against it a long while ago.

So much for Onesicritus and his *ἀνθεφορτής*. In the sentence I quoted above Nyberg further stated that Strabo had 'attested' similar customs also for the Massagetae. Here again Strabo is not the witness. In his description of the Massagetae he merely copied an ancient report, one that had already been used by Herodotus; it is usually, no doubt correctly, attributed to Hecataios of Miletus. His occasion for writing on the Massagetae was their fight against Cyrus, who—it is said—fell in a battle with these ferocious nomads of the steppes around Lake Aral. No one ever knew anything worth mentioning about them; no one can say whether even their war with Cyrus is historical. So when we are told that they sacrificed the older members of their community at a solemn ceremony; offered up some cattle at the same time; boiled the flesh of both victims together and feasted on it; accounted those who thus ended their days the most fortunate; and bewailed the ill fortune of those who, dying of disease, escaped the happiness of being eaten by their loving children—we should be wise not to regard such and similar things as strictly historical facts: for Hecataios certainly did not visit the Massagetae and observe their horrid practices.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> W. T. Blanford, *Zoology* (= *Eastern Persia*, vol. ii), p. 46.

<sup>2</sup> The problem of the Massagetae has been confused rather than elucidated by modern writers. Both Herodotus and Strabo tell us that the Massagetae lived chiefly on fish. Marquart explained their name as 'fish-eaters'. Nyberg, however, states that Herodotus *confirms* Marquart's etymology (*ibid.*, p. 252); this is putting the cart before the horse. Christensen proposed a new etymology: 'the great Saka'. With its help Dr. Tarn has divided the Massagetae into 'various subject races, including primitive "fish-eaters" in the swamp' and 'their Saka overlords'—eating his cake and having it (*Greeks in Bactria*, p. 81). I would say that the 'fish-eaters' should go out altogether. The wording in Herodotus (i. 216), *ἀνθεφορτής* (*ἀνθεφορτής*), shows that this is merely an etymology of the name, perpetrated by Hecataios' Persian or Median informant, who thought of OIr. *marayu* 'fish' and *gūd* (early pronounced *grūd*), precisely the equivalent

It is well known that the ascription of displeasing customs of this type to nations about which nobody knew anything is a standard feature of Greek historiography. The peoples with whom the Greeks were acquainted were barbarians: those who lived beyond the barbarians and of whom they knew merely the name were inevitably cannibals or worse.

We have now dealt with two specimens of the atrocity stories that Greeks invented about the Iranians; though it is not even certain that the Massagetae were Iranians. There are a few more stories of this sort; it would be tedious to enumerate them: none of them stands up to criticism of the mildest kind. If, however, one takes all such fancy tales for gospel truth and adds them up, one is bound to gain a picture of the Iranians that is far removed from reality. In such a picture, a caricature of the truth, even shamanism will fit in effortlessly; for why should not those who boiled and ate their parents have prostituted themselves on a Maga?

As we had to touch on questions of historical criticism, it may be convenient to fit in here a few remarks on the historical Zoroaster as represented by Herzfeld. There is no doubt that the ultimate basis of Herzfeld's theories is the presumed identity of Vištāspa, the father of Darius, with Vištāspa, the protector of Zoroaster. Their identity was first assumed by Ammianus Marcellinus in the fourth century A.D., but passed unnoticed by Chares of Mytilene, one of Alexander's officials and a well-informed author, who took down an elaborate popular story about Vištāspa, the protector of Zoroaster, without mentioning the other Vištāspa or confusing the two in any way: from which one is tempted to infer that the identity was unknown to his Persian informants, as early as the fourth century B.C. In modern times the identity has been asserted by various scholars and lately elaborated by Hertel and Herzfeld. One objection has always been raised: the difference in the genealogies of the two personalities.<sup>1</sup> On the one hand: the father of Darius, the *χάρακος* Vištāspa, son of Ariāma, of the Achaemenid family; on the other: the father of Spəntōdās, the *hāvi* Vištāspa, son of Aurvātāspa, of the Naotara family. All attempts at overcoming this objection have failed. One may perhaps interpret away one

of *erjōva*. This is, of course, popular etymology; the story about the fish-eating race is in its train. The *y* in the name, in place of the expected *a*, renders Christensen's etymology unacceptable.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Nyberg, *op. cit.*, pp. 357 sq.

point of difference and still expect to be believed; but one cannot interpret away everything and command conviction. For example, we are told that Darius' original name was Spəntiōdāta and that he took the name of Darius as 'throne-name' when he became king. We might credit this removal of the name of Vištāspa's son, even though we should regret the absence of any evidence pointing to it; but we shall not believe even that when we find that equally artificial devices are needed to do away with the name of Vištāspa's father as well and with all other points of difference. Indeed it is impossible to accept the whole theory, unless one were to assume that all sources, however different in origin and tendency, from the Avesta to the inscriptions of Darius and the Greek historians, were inspired by the same brand of obscurantism, that all were somehow co-operating to bring about the discomfiture of the students of history.

There is no point in pursuing this matter any farther; it has been argued often enough. However, we have now been presented with a new hypothesis, which is to bolster up the discredited theory of the identity of the two Vištāpas. It may be worth while to make a few observations on this new hypothesis, which I have sketched in my first lecture. Its central point is the assumption that Zoroaster was of royal birth, a grandson of Astyages, the last Median king whom Cyrus deposed.

This new hypothesis has only one merit: that it is new and unexpected. There is a strong *a priori* ground against it. In almost all religions we find a tendency to provide the founders with a noble lineage. However humble their origin in brutal fact, it had to be traced, wherever at all possible, to a king of the distant past, the more distant the better, to silence critical spirits. This tendency was not alien to Zoroastrianism. In the Avesta, even its latest parts, Zoroaster has as yet no royal ancestors; but in the Pahlavi books the expected genealogical tree appears, connecting Zoroaster with Manušehr (a mythical king) in the fourteenth generation, a comfortable distance. If we were to follow Herzfeld, we should be confronted with the singular circumstance that although Zoroaster had been not merely of royal ancestry, but even the legitimate heir to the Iranian throne, yet all sources, indigenous or foreign, had in unison suppressed his true origin, which one would have expected his followers at least to proclaim from the house-tops. This runs counter to all historical experience. Again we find our sources

affected by that strange and deplorable obscurantism to which I have referred.

One can also put it in this way: even if the Zoroastrian books through the ages had proclaimed, unanimously, that Zoroaster had been not only a prophet but also the rightful successor to the kingship, we should not believe one word of it. We should shrug our shoulders and say: merely another example of the manner in which the founders of religions are exalted by the faithful. As it is, no claim to such noble ancestry has ever been put forward either by Zoroastrians or by anybody else; therefore, it has no basis in fact.

Let us see now on what the new hypothesis does base itself. It is a story told by Ctesias; it is unconfirmed by any other authority. Astyages, Ctesias said, had no son. He gave his only daughter, Amytis, in marriage to Spitamas, a Median nobleman, and promised him the succession. Two sons were born to Amytis, Spitakes and Megabernes. Later, when Cyrus overthrew Astyages, he killed Spitamas and took Amytis as his wife,<sup>1</sup> to secure a pretence of legitimacy. Amytis then became the mother of the two sons of Cyrus, Cambyses<sup>2</sup> and Bardiya (whom Ctesias wrongly calls Tanyoxarkes). At the end of his reign Cyrus was involved in a war against the Derbikes (whom Ctesias wrongly localized on the Indian border while in fact they lived in the neighbourhood of Hyrcania). In the fight Cyrus received a mortal wound. On his death-bed he appointed Cambyses as his successor and made Bardiya/Tanyoxarkes Viceroy of Bactria and other provinces; but he did not forget his two stepsons: to Spitakes he gave the satrapy over the newly conquered Derbikes and to Megabernes a similar post.

So far Ctesias. To the uninitiated it will not immediately be clear what this story has to do with Zoroaster. Its concealed pertinence has now been uncovered. We know that Zoroaster belonged to the Spitamid family. He is called Spitarna in the Avesta, and so are his close relatives. Now there is a Spitamas in Ctesias' tale: should he not have been a member of Zoroaster's family? At first Herzfeld wavered;<sup>3</sup> might not Zoroaster himself have been the same as Spitamas, the son-in-law of Astyages? In the outcome he

<sup>1</sup> Astyages' daughter was the mother of Cyrus according to Herodotus (i. 75, 97, 107-8).

<sup>2</sup> Herodotus (ii. 1; iii. 2-3) emphatically states that the mother of Cambyses was an Achaemenian princess, Cassandane, daughter of Pharnaspes.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Herzfeld, op. cit. i. 50 ff.

abandoned this idea. Perhaps it would have been inconvenient to let Zoroaster find an untimely death at the hand of Cyrus in 550 B.C. or close to that date—that would have badly tangled the web woven around Zoroaster, Vištāspa, and Darius; Zoroaster would not have been available, thirty years later, to counsel his bosom-friend Darius to proceed to the murder of Gaumāta.

Possibly in view of such obstacles Herzfeld decided to cast Spitakes for the role of Zoroaster. Spitakes is explained as a diminutive of Spitama; hence it should mean 'the little Spitama'. One regrets to see here again that the genealogies so little resemble each other. They do not coincide in a single name. On the one hand: Spitakes, son of Spitamas and Amytis, on the other: Zaraθuštra, son of Pourušaspa and Duydovā. The differences have to be explained away as they were explained away in the case of Vištāspa; but in that case there was at least one genuine coincidence; here nothing agrees. In this way we could as well identify Zoroaster with Homer or with Buddha or with anybody else.

There is only one point that requires explanation: the use of the name of Spitamas by Ctesias; for this is certainly an uncommon name, and it is associated with Zoroaster's family. The explanation becomes obvious as soon as one considers the nature of the book that Ctesias wrote. He composed it after 398 B.C. on his return from the Persian capital where he had spent long years as court physician. His book is important enough for the events of his own time, but almost without any value for the earlier period. For this period he relied not so much on information he could have collected in Persia as rather on Herodotus supplemented by his imagination. He had no understanding of history, which appeared to him as an endless succession of court intrigues; the *βασιλεύων διηγέρει* on which he pretended to base himself have long been recognized in their true nature: as harem gossip.

This author, whom Herzfeld treated as a Father of History, had a low reputation even in antiquity. Time has not improved it. Modern historians, almost without exception, put little or no store by what he has to say; Marquart, for example, talked of him as the Father of Romances, which is appropriate. One of his tricks is to get all his names wrong, and another, to use names that were current in his own time in his stories of antiquity. That is why the name of Spitamas figures in his tale of Astyages and Cyrus. In his time the name of Zoroaster, the Spitama, was known to

everyone in Persia; in honour of the prophet people chose the name 'Spitama' for their children.<sup>1</sup> As regards the tale itself, its romantic hue is visible plainly enough to proclaim its inventor.

Herzfeld's work is filled with identifications of names and persons appearing on the one hand in the Avesta, on the other in the historical records of the early Achaemenid epoch, identifications which carry as much conviction as does the identification of Zoroaster with Spitakes, the governor of the Derbikes. It would be a lengthy business to discuss all of them. Instead of doing that, I will now give a representative specimen, with full details, so that every reader can judge for himself whether the method pursued by Herzfeld is likely to lead to lasting results.

'Among the brothers and cousins of Vištāspa', Herzfeld wrote,<sup>2</sup> 'is one Ātarhvarnah.' The facts are these: in the Farvardīn Yašt, a litany commemorating, in the form of a long list, the names of members of the early Zoroastrian community, one Ātaroxvarnah is mentioned. No details are given of his origin or relationship. To say that he was a brother or cousin of Vištāspa's is mere presumption. It seems to be founded on the consideration that names of members of Vištāspa's family are mentioned in proximity, although not in close proximity, to the name of Ātaroxvarnah; the inference is scarcely admissible. In truth, the list appears to have been arranged with regard to resemblance in names rather than with regard to the relationship of their bearers. Thus Ātaroxvarnah stands in an enumeration of eight names with *ātar-* 'fire' as the first part of compounds: Ātaravanu, Ātarapāta, Ātaradāta, Ātaracihrā, Ātaroxvarnah, Ātarasavah, Ātarazantu, Ātaradaihū; incidentally, there are no other names of this type (a very common type) elsewhere in the long list.

One of the most important discoveries made by Herzfeld was his find of the household archives of the early Achaemenian rulers, some thirty thousand tablets and fragments of tablets, most of them written in Elamite, a few in Aramaic. In one of the Elamite tablets, dated in the year 16 of Darius, one Par-na-k-ka orders a *ke-so-pat-ti-i* to slaughter a hundred sheep; *ke-so-pat-ti-i* is said to represent an unattested Persian word *gēšupatiš* and mean 'chief of the

<sup>1</sup> Amytis and Spitamas in the time of Artaxerxes I: Ctesias § 39 (§ 70 ed. Gilmore) where the two names are in juxtaposition. Cf. further Herzfeld, op. cit., p. 48, on a Spitama of the time of Ctesias.

<sup>2</sup> Herzfeld, op. cit. i. 38.

archives" (perhaps it is merely a *gāiθāpati* 'shepherd'). The same Par-na-k-ka occurs in another tablet as the son of one Aršāma. Now although Parnaka, in Greek transcription *Φαρνάκης*, and Aršāma were among the commonest names current in ancient Iran (as common as Ahmad and 'Ali in Muslim times), nevertheless Herzfeld presumed that this Aršāma was the same as Aršāma, the grandfather of Darius, and this Parnaka, therefore, a brother of Vištāspa and uncle of Darius.

If we conceded that the Ātaraxvaranah of the Farvardin Yašt was a brother or cousin to Vištāspa, the protector of Zoroaster (which we do not), and if we conceded that Parnaka was a brother to Vištāspa, the father of Darius (which we also do not), even then we could not agree to the identification of Parnaka with Ātaraxvaranah which Herzfeld claimed. The first and characteristic half of the Avestan name seems to have disappeared. As always there is an explanation ready to hand (the one is the full name, the other a shortened form), but the reader is scarcely in the mood for further concessions to imagination.

Hertel and Herzfeld have devoted a colossal amount of labour to the comparison of the Avestan nomenclature with the names found in the historical records of the Achaemenian state; in this work they have drawn also on pseudo-historical sources to which one should not attach much value, such as Ctesins. Great ingenuity has been displayed by them, all to prove one thing, and one thing only: that Vištāspa, the protector of Zoroaster, and Vištāspa, the father of Darius, were one and the same person. But the net result is that they have proved the opposite of what they set out to prove. Not a single straight equation has been turned up by them, in spite of the most comprehensive search, not one identification that could stand on its own merits without the need of arduous and cumbersome explanations. Were the basic hypothesis correct, unambiguous equations should have been found easily and in great number. Their total absence, now amply demonstrated by Herzfeld against his will, proves that the two Vištāspas have nothing in common but their name.

Before we can leave the realm of historical questions, there remains a matter that cannot be passed over without some attempt at elucidation. In a way it is also an historical problem. I mean Nyberg's suggestion that Zoroaster drugged himself with hemp.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

In order to appreciate how deeply this suggestion must shock those who call themselves Zoroastrians, one has to understand the effects which habitual indulging in hemp produces on the human organism. Schlimmer, an Austrian physician who spent long years in Persia in the second half of the last century, described how he laboured, for three whole days, to bring back to consciousness a man who had been drugged with Indian hemp oil. He then wrote:<sup>1</sup>

In spite of these terrible effects, I have never heard of a strictly mortal case; but the repulsive habit of taking the oil of the tops of Indian hemp and the various electuaries made from it, in order to secure a moral calmness which lets one envisage all vicissitudes and miseries of human life in an agreeable light, induces in habitual takers a state of remarkable dullness and indolence, which makes them renounce all human decency and delicacy.

It is well known that in Persia hemp, with all its derivatives, *bang*, *gars*, or *hāsi*, has a particularly bad reputation. A man who is addicted to them is held in universal contempt. I need scarcely remind readers of the story of the *Hasāsiyyin*, the Assassins of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries; it is familiar enough. If one reflects on the effects of hemp, the physical, mental, and moral deterioration it brings, the resulting destruction of will-power and stimulation of criminal tendencies, one becomes inclined to reject Nyberg's suggestion without further consideration. Nevertheless, we will briefly review the proofs he offers. They can be summed up under three heads.

Firstly, there is an argument based on what is called 'typological classification'. It proceeds on the assumption that all persons prominent in religious life can be assigned to a certain, small number of types, in the characteristics of which they share. In Nyberg's view, Zoroaster was a typical shaman. We should thus have the following syllogism:

Zoroaster was a shaman—  
Some shamans drug themselves—  
Therefore Zoroaster drugged himself.

The fallacy is obvious. One cannot say 'all shamans drug themselves'; that would be far from the truth. In any case we do not

<sup>1</sup> J. L. Schlimmer, *Terminologie Médico-Pharmaceutique et Anthropologique Française-Persane* (Téhéran 1874), pp. 105-6. Numberless observations of similar trend can be quoted.

admit that Zoroaster was a shaman and would prefer to allow him some measure of individuality.

The second argument is based on a passage in Herodotus. The Scythians of southern Russia, Herodotus said, never washed themselves with water, but took a kind of vapour-bath. To do so they crept into a felt-covered hut (which can be compared to the 'sweat-lodge' of the American Indians), put red-hot stones into it, and threw hemp-seed on the stones: the resulting vapour gave them delirious pleasure, and 'they broke into shouts of joy'. Here we have, at last! the Scythians, reputedly Iranians, intoxicating themselves with hemp. We might now get this syllogism:

The Scythians were Iranians—

The Scythians drugged themselves with hemp—

Therefore, the Iranians drugged themselves with hemp.

This is even less sound than the preceding conclusion. Scarcely anyone nowadays would subscribe to the opinion that *all* the multi-farious tribes to which the Greeks vaguely referred as Scythians were Iranians; no doubt there were a few Iranians among them. At any rate, what the Scythians did in southern Russia has no bearing on the customs of the Iranians in Persia or on the Oxus.

The third argument rests on direct statements in Zoroastrian literature. Here we are on safer ground. There is the word *baasha* in the Avesta, *mang* in Pahlavi, which, like the Persian word *bang*, means 'hemp' according to Nyberg. In spite of the importance which Zoroaster is said to have attached to hemp, he is silent on it in the *Gāthās*. However, the *Farvardin Yašt*, the list of members of the early Zoroastrian community, mentions a man with the name *Pouru.banha*, said to mean 'he who possesses much hemp'. The mere existence of such a name indicates, according to Nyberg, that the early Zoroastrians used hemp as a narcotic; others may think that the name, if correctly interpreted, can at the most serve to show that they cultivated hemp, possibly for the purpose for which hemp is cultivated all the world over, i.e. to obtain its fibre. Except in this name, *baasha* is mentioned in the Avesta with disapproval throughout. The use of *baasha*, as a drug employed in producing miscarriage, is prohibited; a demon is referred to as *baasha vibanha*; and in a quaint text Ahura Mazdāh is called *ax\*afna abanha* 'without sleep, without *baasha*' or, in Nyberg's translation,

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Nyberg, op. cit., pp. 177 sq.

'without trance, without hemp'. All these passages occur in the *Vendidad* and so belong to the time when the Zoroastrians showed that strange dislike for all that Zoroaster held dear, which I described in my first lecture.

This is the whole of the Avestan material. There is nothing here to show that Zoroaster so much as knew of the existence of hemp. To come now to the Pahlavi literature, we read in the *Bundahishn* that Ahura Mazdāh gave a dose of *mang* to the Primordial Bull to kill him painlessly, so that he should escape the slow death which Ahriman had planned for him. Then there is the story of Ardā Virāf, which Nyberg regards as the last reflex of the ancient ecstatic practices.<sup>2</sup> The book in which it is found is a late product from post-Sassanian times. Ardā Virāf, the most saintly among the Zoroastrians, is selected as messenger to Heaven and Hell to discover the fate of the soul after death. To speed him on the long and dangerous journey he is to be given a drink of wine mixed with *mang*. At first he refuses the poisonous cup; for he does not wish to die. His seven sisters, whose sole support he is, implore him to persist in his refusal; for they know that *mang* is a deadly poison. But it is hoped that God will not accept his sacrifice and will allow his soul to return to the Living. So in the end he allows himself to be persuaded, makes his last will and testament, and performs the last rites as a dying man would do: he drinks the poison and is as dead for seven days and nights, then comes to, miraculously, and tells his anxiously waiting friends what he has seen.

In this story I find no trace of any ecstatic practices. The point is that *mang* was a deadly poison: Ardā Virāf returned to life in spite of having taken a poison that ordinarily brought certain death; that he survived was a miracle. This view is confirmed by the story in the *Bundahishn*: the Primordial Bull died after swallowing *mang*; he did not gambol and frolic about in ecstasy. Zoroaster would have been ill-advised, had he tried to make a habit of taking *mang*; after the first attempt he would have been no longer in a position to compose any *Gāthās*. Incidentally, the two Pahlavi passages show clearly enough that *mang*, whatever it was, was not hemp; for even a large overdose of the worst derivative of hemp does not kill.<sup>3</sup>

We have now reviewed the whole of the evidence that Nyberg

<sup>1</sup> Nyberg, op. cit., p. 178.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. ibid., p. 290.

<sup>3</sup> See above (p. 10) the passage quoted from Schlimmer.

has brought forward in support of his allegation that Zoroaster may have been a hemp-addict. We have not found one tittle of proof in it. Any doubts that may still linger are dispelled as soon as one takes into account certain facts which Nyberg has not mentioned in his book. I will state them as briefly as possible.

1. The derivatives of Indian hemp known as *bang*, *haſiſ*, and so on, were not known in Iran or anywhere west of Iran before the eleventh century of our era at the earliest. Acquaintance with Indian hemp is ultimately due to the Muslim conquest of India in the first years of that century. The plant is first mentioned by medical writers in the thirteenth century, but must have been known a little before that date.<sup>1</sup> At any rate, it is a bad anachronism to talk, as Nyberg does,<sup>2</sup> of a 'West-Iranian *haſiſ*-nest' with reference to the sixth century B.C.

2. The ordinary hemp plant that was cultivated in Persia and elsewhere for its fibre and the oil of its seeds, also possesses slight narcotic properties, slight in comparison with the Indian variety; but on the whole the presence of such properties passed unnoticed in ancient times. Greek, Syrian, Arab, and Persian medical books and pharmacopoeias, unimpeachable authorities in a question of this kind, are unanimous on this point. The most that is ever said is that one gets a headache if one eats too much of its seeds.<sup>3</sup> Its narcotic quality was discovered only after the Indian variety had become known.

3. The Persian word *bang*, in so far as it means 'Indian hemp', is a loan-word from the Indian term *bhang*. In Persian—unfortunately—the loan-word collided with an indigenous word *bang* which also designated a plant, namely, 'henbane'. In Persian books *bang* never means anything but 'henbane', at least until the twelfth century;<sup>4</sup> it still has that meaning nowadays, beside that imported

<sup>1</sup> Cf. E. G. Browne, *A Literary History of Persia*, ii. 204 sqq. and his paper *A Chapter from the History of Cannabis Indica*, quoted *ibid.*, p. 205, n. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Nyberg, *op. cit.*, p. 341 (the Median town Kunduru).

<sup>3</sup> e.g. *Kitābū l-abnīyah 'an Haqd'iqi l-adwiyah*, p. 158, l. 1.

<sup>4</sup> See e.g. *Kitābū l-abnīyah*, pp. 54 sq. There are four kinds of *bang* = *Hyoscyamus*, the black, the red, the white, and the brown. Only the white variety (= *Hyoscyamus albus*) is used medicinally. All are highly poisonous, induce torpor, madness, disable, &c. On the Syrian and Arab writers see I. Löw, *Aramäische Pflanzennamen*, p. 381, where Arab. *bañf* (from Pers. *bang*) = *bañf*. Meyerhof in his edition of Maimonides' *Sark Asmā'i l-Uqqād* (Cairo 1940) attributed confusion of *bañf* with the Indian *bhang* to his author (p. 32); but that confusion is not present in the text of Maimonides. Incidentally, Meyerhof remarked that 'au Caire on vend encore les fleurs, feuilles et semences

with the Indian word. This meaning, of course, is appropriate also to the Pahlavi word *mang*, which as we have seen was a deadly poison.

4. The correct word for 'hemp' in Pahlavi and classical Persian is not *mang* or *bang*, but *lāhdānah/lāhdāne*.

5. It is very far from certain that the Avestan word *bapha* is connected at all with Pahlavi *mang*, Persian *bang*. There is the Vendidad passage in which God is said to be *ax\*afna abapha*; to translate, as is usually done, as 'without sleep, without *bapha*'—whether hemp or henbane—makes it appear a little incongruous. I should prefer 'not subject to sleep, not liable to perish', taking *bapha* as corresponding to Sanskrit *dhvanya*—'perishing, coming to an end, destruction'. This explanation is in better agreement with the rules of phonology than the current one, and the meaning fits the other Avestan passages.<sup>1</sup>

This concludes what I wish to say on the new theories that Nyberg and Herzfeld have put forward. My third lecture will be devoted to the examination of a few facts that seem to be consistent with the common opinion on Zoroaster.

de la jusquaine blanche' as *bhang*. Dymock, Warden, and Hooper, *Pharmacographia Indica*, ii. 628; *bang*, *barf* = *Hyoscyamus spec.*, the variety imported from Khorasan into India = *Hyoscyamus reticulatus* L. Armenian *bang* 'Bilsenkraut', Hübschmann, *Arm. Gramm.*, 263.

<sup>1</sup> *vidhanya* = Skt. *vidhanya*.

### THIRD LECTURE

In my first two lectures I gave some of the reasons that prevent me from accepting the extravagant views on Zoroaster which Nyberg and Herzfeld have presented. In this lecture we shall be occupied with reviewing some matters that lie within the area of common opinion.

I hope I shall be forgiven if I refrain from defining what the common opinion on Zoroaster is. There is scarcely a point on which there is unanimity: Zoroaster's time and place, the religion he inherited from his forefathers, the message he brought, his aim, his community, the development of his church, the history of the Avesta—each scholar will dissent from his fellows on one point or the other. In spite of this healthy divergence of views there are nevertheless certain basic matters on which all but extremists are agreed. We must not lose sight of the essentials in favour of mere details. It is agreed, for example, that Zoroaster was a man of forceful personality who impressed the people of his time so deeply that his memory was never extinguished; that he was a prophet, if prophet means one who believes himself inspired by a divine being to bring a message to his people; that he possessed moral integrity, preached truth and truthfulness, and abhorred lies, deceit, and hypocrisy; that he had something new to say that was worth both saying and listening to; and that the people whose spiritual guide he was were not savages but reasonable human beings.

The first matter to be considered in this lecture is the date of Zoroaster. It is obviously impossible to understand anything of anyone without knowing, at least approximately, the time in which he lived, without apprehending, by such knowledge, his environment, the conditions of life, the cultural situation in which he found himself. To say that the date is irrelevant shows abysmal lack of feeling for all history. The date must be settled one way or the other; without it all discussion on Zoroaster will remain futile.

On the date there have been, in essence, only two opinions. The Zoroastrian tradition has preserved a date which would put Zoroaster in the neighbourhood of 600 B.C. Opinion is divided according to whether this traditional date is accepted as true or rejected.

I will say straightway that I count myself among those who accept the date and all that flows from it. There is nothing in the historical situation, in the cultural environment, in the religious development, in fact in anything, that can be said to conflict with it. As it can be shown to be in perfect agreement with the required conditions, we should accept it as a fact and suppress the natural urge to doubt all and everything, and in particular any kind of date.

Those who reject the date seem to do so not so much because of reasoned arguments but out of a vague feeling, the feeling that the *Gāthās* of Zoroaster are old, old, ever so old; as if 600 B.C. were not old enough for almost anything! It was due to the same kind of vague feeling that earlier generations of scholars attributed the *Rigveda* to the third millennium B.C.—an estimate that is thoroughly discredited nowadays. Of course, this feeling is not, as a rule, represented as such, but appears in the guise of specious reasoning. In the case of Zoroaster, we have to deal chiefly with two pleas: one is a linguistic argument of such extraordinary feebleness that one is amazed at finding it seriously discussed at all; the other is the hitherto unsuccessful attempt to set the traditional date aside by showing that it is not a genuinely transmitted date, but one found by calculation in later times.

The linguistic argument is this: in comparison with the language of the Old Persian inscriptions the language of the *Gāthās* is far less developed, far closer to hypothetical Old Iranian; therefore, the *Gāthās* should be older than the oldest Old Persian inscriptions by more than a few decades. This argument would hold good only if the language of the *Gāthās* were the same dialect, at an earlier stage, as Old Persian; but that is not the case and has never been claimed. It is notorious that the various dialects of one and the same language group develop at different speeds and in different directions, so that the comparison of two dialects can never lead to a relative date. Moreover, in Iranian the Eastern and Western dialects developed not merely in different but in opposite directions; thus while the word endings disappeared in the West, they were well maintained in the East. From the point of view of comparative linguistics the *Gāthās* could have been composed at a date far later than 600 B.C.

Thus the only possible way of disparaging the traditional date is by proving that it was concocted by a clever chronologist. The latest attempt of this kind was by Nyberg, who attributed its

invention to the time of Yezdegerd 'the Sinner', around A.D. 400, when the expectation that the end of the world was near had kept (to believe Nyberg) chronologists working overtime. We need not go into the details of his ingenious construction; for there is no evidence of any description to show that the Persians of the time of Yezdegerd were worried by millennial speculations; but, what is more important, it has been proved in the meantime that the traditional date must have been known as early as the beginning of the Sassanian reign, in the third century.

Not much value can be attached to a Manichaean text<sup>1</sup> which gives the time passed between the Biblical Enoch and King Vištāspa on the basis of a calculation in which the traditional date of Zoroaster appears to be involved; there is a gap in the manuscript at the critical point. However, clear proof is furnished by a discovery made by an American scholar, Dr. Hildegard Lewy,<sup>2</sup> and perfected by Sayyid Hasan Taqizadeh.<sup>3</sup> It is briefly this:

Under the first Sassanian kings a system of chronology was established which allowed the Arsacid dynasty, the Parthian kings whom the Sassanians displaced, only 266 years, little more than half the period during which that dynasty had, in fact, ruled over Iran. This singular mistake was explained by an Arab author of the tenth century, Mas'ūdī, as due to deliberate fraud on the part of the Sassanian kings, who had wished to belittle the memory of their hated predecessors and therefore, finding the length of their rule unsuitably impressive, simply decreed its reduction by half. In spite of its strangeness Mas'ūdī's explanation found credit until recent times; the truth of the matter has only now been recognized by the two scholars I mentioned.

At the beginning of the Sassanian epoch there was current in Persia only one era by which events could be conveniently dated: the Seleucid era.<sup>4</sup> That it was widely used in that country is well established; thus the Parthian coins date by it. However, although the Seleucid era was used, its origin was not known; in particular, the Persians did not know that it was a foreign era. Wrongly believing it to be an indigenous way of counting years,

<sup>1</sup> *Bull. School Or. & Afr. Stud.* xi (1943), p. 73.

<sup>2</sup> 'The Genesis of the Faulty Persian Chronology', *JASOS*, lixiv (1944), pp. 197-214.

<sup>3</sup> 'The Era of Zoroaster', *JRAS*, (1947), pp. 33-40.

<sup>4</sup> Occasionally the 'Arsacid' era was used; thus in the inscription of Artaban V, dated in the year 462 (erroneously read as 532 by Ghirshman, *Monuments Pict.* 97 sqq.).

they combined it recklessly with their world-year of twelve thousand years, which had been devised many centuries earlier, perhaps in the fifth century B.C. This world-year had been a vague affair. The great events of world history as seen by the Persians were fixed in it: the creation of the world, the First Man, the coming of Zoroaster, the future Messiah, Judgement Day, &c.; but it had no precise relation to every-day life. This was changed now: by becoming combined with the Seleucid era the world-year ceased to be a nebulous speculation and gained practical importance. The years of the Seleucid era were identified with the corresponding years of the tenth millennium of the world-year; thus the Seleucid year 538, which was counted as the official beginning of Sassanian rule, became the year 9,538 of the world era.

Now, on the other hand, the tenth millennium is the one that opens with the Coming of Zoroaster. In the year 9,001 Zoroaster, then 42 years of age, converted King Vištāspa. From that time until Alexander the Great 258 years passed. Alexander was believed to have ruled for fourteen years. This then is the 'traditional date of Zoroaster': either 258 years before Alexander or  $258 + 14 = 272$  years before the death of Alexander (the Coming of Zoroaster) or  $258 + 42 = 300$  years before Alexander (the birth of Zoroaster).

When the Seleucid era was identified with the tenth millennium, its beginning necessarily coincided with the Coming of Zoroaster. Thus the Seleucid era became, so to speak, the 'era of Zoroaster'. The mistake that was made in determining the length of the Arsacid rule followed automatically. Ardashir, the first Sassanian king, ascended the throne in 538. Subtract from 538 the 258 years from the Coming of Zoroaster to Alexander and the 14 years of Alexander, then the remainder must be the period of Arsacid rule (which was wrongly believed to have begun with the death of Alexander). This remainder is precisely 266 years, the number of years actually allotted to the Arsacids in the Sassanian tradition.

The mistake thus proves to be a perfectly innocent one. It reveals not deliberate fraud, as Mas'ūdī thought, but singular ignorance of Iranian history. The point that concerns us here is that the mistake presupposes acquaintance with the traditional date of Zoroaster, 258 years before Alexander. It became possible only because the traditional date was not merely known to exist, but respected as an immutable quantity.

The intrusion of the Seleucid era into the Zoroastrian sacred

calendar is, at first sight, very strange. It becomes less so when one knows that it was misused, in a similar fashion, by the Manichaeans. The Manichaeans had the same kind of world-year as the Zoroastrians—12,000 years, 12 world-months of one thousand years each. The world-months, as the months of the solar year, could be (and usually were) named after the twelve constellations; thus the first thousand years constituted the 'millennium of Aries', the second the 'millennium of Taurus', and so on. There exists an interesting Chinese document<sup>8</sup> on the Manichaean religion that so far has not been made accessible to Western scholars. It is a brief statement which the Manichaean bishop of China submitted to the Chinese emperor in A.D. 731. It gives the chief points in the history of the Manichaean Church, its dogmas, rites, sacred books, and so forth. In that document it is said that according to the world-year calendar: 'in the 527th year of the era controlled by the 12th constellation called *mo-hsieh* the Buddha of Light Mani was born in the country of Su-lin in the royal palace of Pa-ti &c.' The name of the twelfth constellation, *mo-hsieh*, is the Parthian or Sogdian word for Pisces, *māsyag*. According to this statement Mani was born in the year 11,527 of the world-era. Now we know that Mani was in fact born in the year 527 of the Seleucid era. The Manichaeans therefore had identified the Seleucid era dates with the corresponding years of the twelfth and last millennium, while the Zoroastrians had chosen the tenth millennium—more providently; for as early as at the date of the Chinese document, A.D. 731, the Manichaeans must have found it difficult to explain why the end of the world had not come with the end of the twelfth millennium, which should have occurred in the spring of 690, over forty years before.

Although it forms no part of the subject under discussion, it may be worth while to mention here that the Chinese document makes it possible to fix the date of the birth of Mani. According to it, he was born on the eighth day of the second Chinese month and died on the fourth day of the first month. These dates were not properly converted, but merely translated. We know that Mani died on the fourth day of the Babylonian month Addaru. As first Chinese month here corresponds to Addaru, second Chinese month should be equal

<sup>8</sup> Yabuki Keiki, *Meisa yoin. Rare and unknown Chinese manuscript remains of Buddhist literature discovered in Tun-huang collected by Sir Aurel Stein and preserved in the British Museum*. Tokyo, 1930, pl. 104. *Taishō Isankyō*, vol. liv, No. 21418.

to the Babylonian month following upon Addaru, which is Nisan. Mani, therefore, was born on the eighth of Nisan in the Seleucid year 527, which corresponds to the 14th of April, A.D. 216.<sup>9</sup>

To return now to Zoroaster, I think we can say that the earlier attempts at disparaging the traditional date have broken down by the demonstration that the date was established by the third century of our era at the latest. It is to be expected that there will be fresh attempts, aiming to show that the date was found by calculation; until that has been shown conclusively, we shall be wise to assume that it is a genuine date.

There is no difficulty in such an assumption. It is but natural that the members of the early Zoroastrian community should have counted the years from a significant moment in the life of their prophet, and that they should have gone on doing so until Alexander destroyed the Persian Empire and, with it, the power of the Magi; that with the confusion brought on by the Macedonian conquest the counting of years should have been interrupted, but, that, nevertheless, that one date, so-and-so many years before Alexander, should have been remembered for all time, although otherwise the memory of all that went on before Alexander and of much that happened after Alexander was extinguished.

That there is nothing strange in all this is readily understood when one considers what Alexander meant to the Persians. To the modern historians who base themselves on Greek or Macedonian authors only, and who in judging the source material give preference to Alexander's intimate friends and companions (the Orientalist might say: his accomplices), while they silence the few critical voices among the Greek writers by pointing out that they had no first-hand knowledge of events since they had no share in Alexander's army command (and, one is tempted to add, no share in the immense booty Alexander's activities brought), Alexander may appear as a saint. To his Persian victims he seemed a veritable monster. They failed to notice the high civilisatory motives which the historians are fond of ascribing to him. They only saw a blood-thirsty conqueror who exterminated whole nations in senseless massacre, who burned their towns and stole their possessions, who even robbed their temples and the tombs of their ancestors. The conquest by Alexander is the greatest break in the continuity of

<sup>9</sup> H.-C. Puech, *Le Manichéisme* (1950), p. 33 and notes 109-10, pp. 215-16, has now arrived at the same result.

Persian history; it took the Persians more than half a millennium to recover from its effects. That is why the counting of the years of Zoroaster came to be interrupted with the advent of Alexander.

When one tries to see Alexander as he was seen by the Persians, one also understands what the final term is in the date *258 years before Alexander*. It cannot refer, for example, to the birth of Alexander or to his accession to the throne of Macedonia, happenings that were irrelevant from the Persian point of view. It can refer only to the event that made him the ruler of all Asia, the death of Darius, the last Achaemenid king, in the summer of 330. The date of Zoroaster is thus 588 B.C. However, from time to time it has been suggested that the date *258 years before Alexander* should mean *258 years before the beginning of the Seleucid era*, because that era was sometimes called 'the era of Alexander'. This explanation cannot be maintained; it is based solely on a mistake which the eminent Muslim astronomer al-Beruni committed in one of his early works, but which he himself denounced in a treatise he wrote later in life for the express purpose of apologizing for this error.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, the Seleucid era only gradually came to be used in Persia, where its introduction passed unnoticed. It was never known in that country as 'the era of Alexander'; how little it was associated with the name of Alexander is best seen by the early Sassanian construction of chronology which put Alexander in the 258th year of that era and not at its beginning.

We are thus entitled to hold to the view that the year 588 B.C. is the true date of Zoroaster. The one uncertain point is whether the year from which his adherents counted was the one in which he reached the age of thirty and had his first revelation, or the one when he was forty and had his first success, or the one when he was forty-two and converted King Vištāspa. The differences are not of much account. The tradition says that his age at death was seventy-seven. Accordingly, the three possible dates of Zoroaster are: 630-553, 628-551, 618-541.

It is not without interest that such a date was given as early as the eighth century by a Syrian writer, Theodore bar Qōnī, who put Zoroaster 628 years and seven months before Christ.<sup>2</sup> If, as is generally supposed, Theodore bar Qōnī used the book which Theodore of Mopsuestia had written against the Magian religion,

<sup>1</sup> See S. H. Taqizadeh, *Bull. School Or. Stud.* x. 129 sqq.

<sup>2</sup> H. Pagnon, *Inscriptions Mandéennes des coupoles de Khoushir*, p. 123.

this date may have been known even at the beginning of the fifth century.

Thus the life-time of Zoroaster immediately preceded the destruction of the Median state by the Persian Cyrus, who conquered the countries of the whole of Asia as known at that time and laid the foundation of the Achaemenian Empire. How far the Median state had extended to the east is not known; there is nothing to indicate that it had ever reached beyond the Caspian Gates. It is likely that it was Cyrus who joined the eastern half of Iran to the western provinces, to Media and Persia; we know that he met his death fighting with nomad tribes somewhere between Marv and the south-eastern corner of the Caspian Sea.

If Cyrus was the first western ruler to conquer the provinces of eastern Iran, they must have been organized, before his advent, in the form of a state or a number of states. Otherwise, if nomad tribes merely had roamed these vast areas, each independent of the next and each hostile to all others, even the great Cyrus could not have accomplished their organization in the brief years he could devote to the East. That would have been a task needing centuries rather than generations; and Cyrus, of course, was chiefly occupied with his western provinces, with Media, Babylonia and Asia Minor.

Moreover, there are reflexes in the Greek tradition which point to the existence of a state in eastern Iran that was independent of the Medians. There is, in particular, the story of the River Akes, which Marquart has analysed so admirably.<sup>1</sup> According to this story, which Herodotus gives, presumably from Hecataios, the Khwarezmians, in the old days, possessed the valley of the Akes, i.e. the Hari-rūd and its continuation, the modern Tejen. They exercised some measure of suzerainty over the Hyrcanians, the Parthians, the Sarangians of Seistan, and the Thamanaeans of Arachosia. Both Marv and Herat were then occupied by the Khwarezmians, whom Hecataios, in one of the few fragments of his work that have come down to us, places to the east of the Parthians.<sup>2</sup>

We can thus be fairly certain that there was a state in eastern Iran which centred around Marv and Herat and co-existed with the Median Empire; which was led by the Khwarezmians and abolished by Cyrus, who deprived them of their southern pro-

<sup>1</sup> J. Markwart, *Welrat und Arang*, pp. 8 sqq.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. W. W. Tarn, *Greeks in Bactria*, pp. 478 sqq.

vinces, whereupon they gradually retired to their northern possessions along the River Oxus.

Zoroaster and his protector, Kavi Vištāspa, fit effortlessly into this situation. The Avesta places them in a country vaguely named Airyanām Vaējō. Both the Avesta and the later Zoroastrian tradition assure us that this Airyanām Vaējō was Khwarezm. This identification should be accepted, but with the qualification that Airyanām Vaējō was not merely the Khwarezm of later times, when it comprised only the districts near the lower course of the Oxus, but the Khwarezm of the time of Vištāspa, of which Marv and Herat formed perhaps the most important part. It is remarkable that according to the Avesta and the whole Persian tradition, as embodied in the Sassanian *Khudāi-nāmag*, Vištāspa was the last of a line of kings. If we see Vištāspa, as we should, as the ruler of the Khwarezmian state of Marv and Herat in the first half of the sixth century, we understand why his dynasty and his state disappeared all of a sudden: his state suffered the fate that Babylon and Lydia had suffered, it lost its separate existence in Cyrus' gigantic empire.

Not more than a passing glance deserves the pseudo-historical construction by some Sassanian theologians, who, at a time when the eastern provinces were lost to the Persians, tried to localize Zoroaster in the West, in Media or Azerbaijan. Its absurdity is apparent when one considers the geographical horizon of the Avesta. A sufficiently large number of place-names occur in the Avesta. We find references to such regions as Seistan, Arachosia, the Hindukush, Bactria, Sogdiana, Marv, Herat, Hyrcania; but the very name of Media is not mentioned in the whole of it.<sup>1</sup> Only Rayā, the north-easternmost town of Media, the first town entered by a traveller from the East, occurs in two particularly late passages. Moreover, one can say confidently that any unbiased reading of the Gāthās always has given, and always will give, the impression that their author was untouched by urban civilization. Yet Media was the one corner of Iran, at the time of Zoroaster, that boasted towns and had reached the state of civilization that goes with the existence of towns.

Summing up, one can say that the traditional date of Zoroaster is in agreement with the requirements of history; and inversely, that the little we know of history demands the date that the tradition provides and the place that it indicates.

<sup>1</sup> Nor, incidentally, is the name of Persia or the Persians mentioned.

To turn now for a moment from history to linguistics, the study of the distribution of the various Iranian dialects and of their inter-relation offers little hope of determining the localities in which the speakers of the languages preserved in the Avesta lived. The most one can say is that the two principal dialects of the Avesta are neither pronouncedly western Iranian nor markedly eastern Iranian, that in fact they occupy an intermediary position. This would agree with the assumption that the Gāthās were composed in the neighbourhood of Marv and Herat, and the later Avestan texts for the greater part in Seistan; but as we know nothing of the languages that were spoken in those regions in later times, and as no dialects have survived there to the present day, we cannot count on definite proof.

At present, our one hope in this field lies in the further exploration of the Khwarezmian language material. I may perhaps recall that, together with my friend Ahmed Zeki Validi Togan, I was the first to draw attention to this material and make some use of it; a few years later our Russian colleagues announced their discovery of the same material and made the same use of it; they also promised an early publication, which so far we have waited for in vain. While it is true that there are considerable difficulties to be surmounted before the Khwarezmian glosses can properly be utilized for the purpose of comparison, it would nevertheless be wrong to leave them out of account altogether, merely because their publication has been impeded.

Although the Khwarezmian material is of very late date—the earliest from the eleventh century, the bulk from the thirteenth—it preserves features of the ancient language. One can quote such verbs as *iy-* 'to go', Av. *iy-*; *miyy-* 'to die', Av. *mirya-*; such nouns as *angēb* (انجی) 'partner', an agricultural term hitherto known only from Aramaic papyri of the fifth century B.C. (אָנְגֵב); *afūr* 'uncle', reflecting an ancient *ptruya*, Av. *tūrya-*; *uđir* 'belly' from *udara-*; *z̄id* 'silver' from Av. *arezata-* (OPers. *ardata-*); *raxt* 'red' cf. Skt. *rakta-*. Of special interest are those cases in which Khwarezmian goes with Avestan. A few representative words may be mentioned here: *ūsanik* 'neighbour' Av. *varəznya-*; *ryen(d)-* 'to call, invite' = Av. *gron-*; *taast-* 'to say' = Av. *vala-*,

<sup>1</sup> A. Cowley, *Aramaic Papyri*, No. 43, L. 9. The word should not be translated as 'compatriot'.

otherwise only in Balochi *gwaſ-*, Orm. *γυθ-*; *arma* 'leave alone', *armic* 'leave him alone', cf. Av. *airime*, *armālād-* &c., otherwise only in Scythian *āpma* 'one' and Ossetic *ārmāt* 'alone'; *wārayāt* 'falcon' = Av. *vāryāta*, otherwise only in Sogdian *w'ry-*; *uſtra* 'arise!', a form that not merely sounds Avestan, but is actually found in the Avesta; *karbun* 'lizard', of the many words of this stem that occur in the various Iranian dialects the only one that corresponds precisely to Av. *kahrpuna-*. And though last not least, the verbal stem *karb-* 'to moan' or 'mumble', a derogatory term: to say *mā karbā*, which roughly meant 'don't talk nonsense', was considered a grave insult; in one passage it is debated whether a Koran teacher who in exasperation said to his pupil *karbda* 'go on moaning (mumbling) it' was guilty of *kuſr*, the gravest sin, which meant expulsion from the Muslim community: the lawyers wisely decided that the teacher had intended to insult not the Koran, but his inept pupil, whose way of reading the sacred book left much to be desired.<sup>2</sup> There is little doubt that it was from this verb<sup>3</sup> that the Gāthic term *karapan-* was derived, which Zoroaster himself used to refer to the priests of whom he disapproved.

One cannot go so far as to say that the linguistic evidence provided by the Khwarezmian material proves the truth of our historical construction; but one can say that it is in consonance with it. That is the most one can hope for in our present state of knowledge.

Having dealt with the time, the place, and the language of Zoroaster, we turn now to his religion. If one asks in what points his religion differs from the other religions of antiquity, the answer is: in his dualism, and in his noble view of Man as the arbiter between Good and Evil. These two matters are closely bound up with each other. Zoroaster saw the world as the battlefield of two eternal abstract Powers, Good and Evil, both of which manifested themselves not only in mental and spiritual phenomena, but also in the material things of this world; this dualism, accordingly, has been well described as an ethical dualism, in contradistinction to the dualisms of a later age in which the two hostile powers were Mind and Matter, or Soul and Matter.

The battle between Good and Evil has been in process since Time began and will go on till the end of the world: but as the two

<sup>1</sup> From *karba* (iptve. sg. 2) + *hī* (suff. pron. sg. 3) + *da* (iptve. particle).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Islamica* iii. 207, 25-6.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Skt. *krp-*.

powers are evenly matched, its outcome is uncertain. The decisive factor will be the collective action of humanity. Every man or woman is free to choose which side to join: his or her support will add permanent strength to the side chosen, and so, in the long run, the acts of Man will weigh the scales in favour of the one side or the other. Thus Zoroaster, beside his principal two powers, recognises a third, which, though not of equal rank, holds the balance.

How different Zoroaster's Man is from the cringing primitive who runs to his witch-doctor to beg for protection against the dark threats of imaginary spirits; or from the trembling believer of the contemporaneous religions of the Near East, who approaches his god with fear and servility! He is a proud man, who faithfully serves the side he has, freely and deliberately, chosen, but who remains conscious of the value of his support and of his own value.

Zoroaster's view of Man—this is the important point—was not reached by nebulous feeling or by the dreams that may come to one in a drugged stupor; it can have been reached only by thinking, and I should say by very clear thinking. This is true also of his dualism. It seems to me that a dualism of this kind can have been built only on a pre-existing monotheism, on the belief that one God, a good God, was responsible for the world. For this reason I would claim that the religion in which Zoroaster grew up was purely monotheistic. Zoroaster's religion (as are most dualistic movements) is best understood as a *protest against monotheism*. Wherever a monotheistic religion establishes itself, this protest is voiced—if there is a man with a brain in his head. Any claim that the world was created by a good and benevolent god must provoke the question why the world, in the outcome, is so very far from good. Zoroaster's answer, that the world had been created by a good god and an evil spirit, of equal power, who set out to spoil the good work, is a complete answer: it is a logical answer, more satisfying to the thinking mind than the one given by the author of the Book of Job, who withdrew to the claim that it did not behove man to inquire into the ways of Omnipotence.

To us such problems may seem matters of past history; but to appreciate Zoroaster, we should see him against the background of his time. If we do that, we cannot help paying tribute to him as an original thinker; for he was the first to put forward this protest, based on reasoning, against monotheism; and he was the first, in drawing the consequence from his dualism to give his lofty

conception of the position of Man. This is a great achievement. It seems all the greater when we consider that in material culture he was not far advanced; far less advanced than the peoples of the Near East, whom he nevertheless surpassed in thought.

So far I have treated it as accepted that Zoroaster *was* a dualist, and that he was the inventor of his dualism; yet doubt has been thrown on both points. To take the second first, it need not detain us for long. If for argument's sake we take it for granted that Zoroaster *was* a dualist, then we can say that Zoroaster was the first man known to advocate dualism; that he himself attributed his message to revelation, not to earlier teachers; that by his adherents he was regarded as their prophet, and as such was believed to have been the first to proclaim his doctrines. It is a little disingenuous to say now 'No, he must have learnt his dualism from somebody else, I don't know whom; it does not matter who it was, anybody would do, anybody, of course, except Zoroaster himself. There is no call for a Shakespeare-Bacon controversy here, all the less as we have not even a name to hang on the Unknown Genius.'

More important is the denial that Zoroaster was a dualist at all. It has been made, firstly, by Parsee theologians who are apt to regard the attribution of dualism as an insult to their prophet and themselves. However, their writings on this point are clearly apologetic. Early in the last century they were attacked by Christian missionaries, who revived the hoary arguments against dualism stored up in the works of the Fathers, and thundered against the Parsees as St. Augustine once had thundered against the Manicheans. Driven on the defence, some of the Parsee theologians raised the status of their good God, depreciated the rank of the Evil Power, and so assimilated their religion to Christianity. Our sympathy goes to those among them who withheld the attack and upheld their ancient belief.

Zoroaster's dualism has been denied, secondly, by modern scholars, on the basis of their interpretation of his own words. Several apparently sound reasons have been advanced. There is a lack of balance in the figures that represent Good and Evil: e.g. there is Ahura Mazdāh on the one side, together with his agent Spanta Mainyu, the Sacred Spirit; but on the other side there is only Anra Mainyu, the Evil Spirit. Spanta Mainyu is the counterpart to Anra Mainyu, so where is a counterpart to Ahura Mazdāh?

Further, throughout the Gāthās there is the firm conviction that Good will triumph; the possibility even, that Evil may gain the victory, is not given a thought; therefore, the Good side must be intrinsically the stronger. Yet if one party preponderates, how can one talk of dualism? Does not dualism, in the strict sense, imply that the two powers are evenly matched in every respect?

Such arguments are not convincing. The same defects, lack of parallelism in the divine and anti-divine figures and ultimate preponderance of one side over the other, are found in all dualist systems; indeed, far from affecting their character as dualist, they appear to be necessary ingredients. They are present even in Manichaeism, the very model of all dualist religions.

The reason for the apparent attribution of greater weight to one power lies in the nature of these movements as religions. Their teachers were not professors of philosophy, arguing dispassionately the merits of new theories on the origin of the world; but prophets who fervently sought to rally humanity to their cause. How could they be expected to admit in public the mere possibility that their chosen side, whose support they demanded, might lose the great battle? But in their hearts they knew that the possibility existed, however much they hoped and even believed that victory would be theirs. Precisely that knowledge gave impetus to their appeal and power to their words. It is implicit in their whole activity; for otherwise, had the good side possessed inherent superiority and been bound to win anyway, there would have been no need for them to exert themselves. There is here a clear conflict between the abstract doctrines and the needs of missionary policy; what is mere hope and optimism tends to be expressed as if it were fact. The existence of this conflict has caused enough trouble to the dualist religions: their enemies were not slow to draw advantage from the resulting inconsistencies.

In Manichaeism the dark or evil Power is led by the King of Darkness. His opponent, in the creation of the world, is the First Man; but he is an emanation of the Father of Greatness, the chief of the light or good Power. The relation between Father of Greatness, First Man, and King of Darkness is precisely that to be observed between Ahura Mazdāh, Spanta Mainyu, and Anra Mainyu. The Manichaean parallel shows that lack of balance among the leading figures is permissible; in the minor figures the absence of symmetry is even more marked. I would now withdraw

the explanation I gave a few years ago.<sup>1</sup> It involved the assumption that in the realm of Darkness there was recognized one higher than Aara Mainyu and directly opposite to Ahura Mazzäh; and that his name was tabooed and therefore is never mentioned in our sources. There is no need for this hypothesis, which by its very nature is incospable of proof.

In any case I can find no evidence in the Gāthās in favour of the theory that Professor Nyberg has evolved on the character of the religion into which Zoroaster was born: that it was a kind of Zervanism, with Ahura Mazzäh in the role of the later Zervan, with Ahura Mazzäh as the father of both the Sacred Spirit and the Evil Spirit. This theory imposes on Zoroastrianism a tortuous development: from Zervanism to the true Zoroastrian dualism, from that back to Zervanism, and from that again to dualism; it can be dismissed as the projection of a late belief into earlier times. As indeed the whole of Nyberg's views on the development that Zoroaster underwent it is based on the assumption that the Gāthās were composed by Zoroaster roughly in the sequence in which they happen to stand now as part of the Yasna. Acquaintance with the history of the sacred books of other religions, the Bible or the Koran or the Rigveda, scarcely encourages one to trust to such good fortune. As a matter of fact, the Gāthās are arranged simply according to their metres, those of the same metre having been placed together; it is hard to believe that Zoroaster, in each stage of his life, should have confined himself to a single metre, and discarded it in favour of the next when he grew a few years older.

To my mind there is no doubt that Zervanism, with its speculations on Time, its apparatus of numbers, and the idea of the world-year, is the outcome of contact between Zoroastrianism and the Babylonian civilization. It originated in the second half of the Achaemenian period. As a party within the Zoroastrian Church it flourished especially during the first centuries of our era, but was later repressed in favour of the orthodox dualism. Its writings were expunged from the Zoroastrian literature; nevertheless the scrutiny of the Pahlavi books (for which we are indebted chiefly to Professor Nyberg and Mr. Záehner) has revealed several valuable Zervanist documents, which the orthodox theologians seem to have overlooked. Although, thanks to these documents, we are now fairly

<sup>1</sup> *Apud* S. G. Champion, *The Eleven Religions* (1944), p. 291.

well acquainted with Zervanism, we still depend, as regards its principal tenets, on foreign sources.

These foreign sources, chiefly Syrian and Armenian Christian writers, are undeniably hostile witnesses. The doctrines they attribute to the Zervanists are often little short of outrageous. One who has observed the perversions and, not rarely, downright lies with which early Christian polemical writers attacked the Manichaeans (no doubt believing that in their good cause every weapon was fair), may well hesitate to accept their word when they set out to ridicule the Zervanists. All here depends on our recognition of the manner in which these writers obtained and used their information.

It has been evident for some time that all the principal anti-Zervanite writers based themselves on one and the same source. At present it is generally held that this ultimate source was the book, *On the Persian Magism*, by Theodore of Mopsuestia, a Christian bishop who died in about A.D. 428. This view leaves out of account a hitherto inaccessible Manichaean text written in the Middle Persian language. The Manichaean fragment<sup>1</sup> mentions the demon *Mâhîn*, known otherwise only from the Armenian *Eznik*, and describes his functions in such a way as to leave no doubt that its author used the same book as the one that lay before

<sup>1</sup> M. 28. F. W. K. Müller published a part of it, but omitted the most interesting sections. The captions are: R. *juwng 'yg 'barr'sm*, V. *gazyla 'yg* = the verse-hymns of the congregation (Armen. *tek*, &c.) of Aburzian. The folio contains parts of three alphabetic poems (the last three verses of one poem, one whole poem, and the first six verses of another) abusing other religions. The lines on the Zervanists form part of the second poem (verses *h*, *w*, *x*, *b*—with *w* in the manuscript in place of the original *u*). Text and translation:

[H] *h' dudy 'ymy'd'w*  
'c 'ydr and d'rynd  
And do not also these  
know by this very fact  
[W] *'nd gzynd h'w'zhrmynd*  
'nd pdy'w 'yn xew  
And they assert that Ohrmizd  
it is consistent with such ideas  
[Z] *z'ur u p'dy'gyb*  
k'nd m'hry dyn' h'mest  
Falsehood and slander  
That Mâhîn, the demon, had  
taught him  
[U] *h'cnynd u 'shynd*  
u b'nd h'j[n]d] d'shoy'w  
They moulder and cut to pieces  
they have been hostile

ky przytynd 'dur stocnynd  
k'nd 'blymij 'w' d'ur  
that worship the blazing Fire  
that their end belongs to Fire!  
'nd 'hrym'w br'zr h'ym  
rynd 'c wnyndyj  
and Ahrenen are brethren—  
that they will come to an evil end.  
gzynd 'br 'zhrmynd  
for r'wla gzynd  
they tell against Ohrmizd:—  
to make the world light.  
*d'm 'y 'zhrmynd u 'hrym'*  
*'y h'rew d'[n]n' jndu'w*  
the creatures of Ohrmizd and Ahrenen:  
to both the Families.

the other anti-Zervanite writers. The Manichaean author was one of Mani's first disciples (Aburšīm or someone close to him) and so must have written about a century before the lifetime of Theodore of Mopsuestia. Moreover, it is clear from the forms of the Persian names used in the ultimate source (e.g. MPers. *m'kmy*,<sup>1</sup> Arm. *Mahm*) that it cannot have been written in the Greek language. There are traces of the Persian dialect in which the Manichaeans wrote, i.e. the language of the Sassanian court, which the Persians called *Dari*; thus the names of the demons *Kundi*<sup>2</sup> and *Gandarawa*<sup>3</sup> show the assimilation of *-nd-* to *-m-*, which is characteristic of that Persian dialect. The nature of the book that gave a description of Zervanism remains thus an unsolved problem.

To conclude, I hope to have shown that the common opinion on Zoroaster, his time, his place, and his religion, is not altogether absurd. A critic may well point out that I have failed to say anything new, and I will not contradict him. It is a fallacy to think that a novel opinion is necessarily right, or an old opinion necessarily wrong.

<sup>1</sup> The Manichaean spelling shows that, contrary to Nyberg, op. cit., p. 385, the name cannot be derived from *mad-īya-*; for original *-adm-* either remains unchanged (Parthian and related dialects) or becomes *-m-* (Middle Persian), cf. *xdm*: *xēm* 'wound', *nšdm*: *nšēm* 'sex', 'nest', &c.

<sup>2</sup> *Kundi* as Manichaean form in the *SGV*, and so restored by M. Benveniste in Theodore bar Qōnī's account of the Zoroastrians (*Le Monde Oriental*, xxvi (1932), p. 203).

<sup>3</sup> *Gwmp* in Theodore bar Qōnī, i.e. *Gumarf* (< *Gonnarß*). Different explanations have been proposed by M. Benveniste (loc. cit., p. 201) and P. de Menasce (*Journal Asiatique*, 1949, pp. 419ff.).

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